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Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this booklet is accurate. Changes that may occur from time to time will be discussed with, and communicating to, the research community where possible. Hires are not or if changes occur, the NRF is not liable to liable by the published information.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

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Introduction

This booklet is intended to provide readers with a resource that will enable them to navigate the National Research Foundation’s (NRF) research funding landscape. Readers will find this a useful tool for interacting with the institution in order to access the numerous funding opportunities available to the research community. The booklet should be read in conjunction with other resources such as the NRF website (www.nrf.ac.za) or publications such as the NRF Annual Report, business plans and funding instrument-specific guides and frameworks. In addition, general enquiries can be directed by e-mail to info@nrf.ac.za or, for grant-related enquiries, to supportdesk@nrf.ac.za.

Mandate

The mandate of the NRF 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, 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.”

This mandate translates into the NRF’s Vision 2020 Strategic Plan (www.nrf.ac.za/). The mandate applies to the NRF’s three organisational arms, namely:

1. The National Research Facilities, which are custodians of large pieces of scientific equipment or large collections of data and specimens. These resources are for the use of researchers across the country. Descriptions of these facilities can be found at www.nrf.ac.za/.

2. Research and Innovation Support and Advancement (RISA), which is a grant and knowledge management unit. This booklet focuses almost entirely on the activities of RISA, and specifically on the award of research grants and the benchmarking of research quality through the rating system.

The South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) aims to advance public awareness, appreciation and engagement of science, technology in South Africa. SAASTA is business Unit of the National Research Foundation.

Investment Principles

The NRF invests its limited resources strategically according to the following broad principles:

1. Awarding funding on a competitive basis;
2. A healthy balance between strategy-driven versus demand-pull funding;
3. Merit-based and rigorous peer review;
4. PhD as a driver;
5. Cross-fertilisation of talent within the National System of Innovation (NSI);
6. Effective, goal-oriented resource allocation;
7. Fairness, transparency and accountability; and
8. Transformation and excellence.

The NRF has identified five Broad Investment Areas, which are listed in Table 1. The allocation of resources will change over time in response to developments in the landscape of the NSI, but will remain within the guidelines set by the NRF strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Investment Area</th>
<th>Funding Instruments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Next Generation</td>
<td>Professional Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Researchers</td>
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<td>Established Researchers</td>
<td>Student Support</td>
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<td>Strategic Investment</td>
<td>Thuthuka: PhD Track</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
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Table 1: NRF’s Broad Investment Areas

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<td>Infrastructure</td>
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<th>Funding Instruments</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme</td>
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<td>African Origins Platform</td>
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<td>Bioinformatics and Functional Genomics</td>
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<td>Blue Skies Research</td>
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<td>Collaborative Postgraduate Training Programme</td>
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<td>Community Engagement Programme</td>
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<td>Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers</td>
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<td>Education Research in South Africa</td>
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<td>Energy Research Programme</td>
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<td>Global Change, Society and Sustainability Research Programme</td>
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<td>Human Capital Development for Multi-Wavelength Astronomy</td>
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<td>Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers</td>
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<td>STRATEGIC INVESTMENT</td>
<td>Indigenous Knowledge Systems</td>
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<td>International Research Grants</td>
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<td>Knowledge Fields Development</td>
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<td>Research and Technology Fund</td>
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<td>SA National Antarctic Programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme</td>
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<td>Centres of Excellence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Knowledge Interchange and Collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South African Research Chairs Initiative</td>
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| INFRASTRUCTURE                         | Equipment-related Travel and Training Grants                                        |
|                                       | Research Infrastructure Support Programmes                                           |
The NRF's wide range of funding opportunities is dynamic and therefore subject to change. Researchers are advised to regularly visit the NRF website at www.nrf.ac.za for notifications of changes and updates on the current status of the respective funding instruments. A list of the current major funding opportunities is provided in Table 1.

### 0. Student Support

#### 2.1. Bursaries and Scholarships

The NRF supports students, mainly at postgraduate level, in the following ways:

- **Grants**
  - Free-standing scholarships, for which students apply online and compete independently on merit.
  - Bursaries and scholarships, where a grant holder is awarded a number of bursaries with inherent research requirements. The grant holder is responsible for selecting the most appropriate and worthy students for these bursaries.

#### 2.2. Grant holder requirements

The applicant must be an established researcher with a distinguished track record of high-quality research and whose application is formally supported by the research institution as defined in Table 3. They must hold a PhD or equivalent degree and have an excellent and extended track record of at least six months per annum in South Africa.

#### 2.3. Research-intensive Institutions

The NRF primarily supports research-intensive institutions conducting basic or applied research of a pre-competitive nature for the benefit of the long-term knowledge base. The institutions must also be committed to human resource capacity development, including equity and redress. The institutions supported by the NRF through its funding instruments and rating programs are listed in Table 3.

#### 2.4. Student Training

The quality of all applications for funding is greatly enhanced if the applicant has a track record of student training, although this is not always an eligibility requirement.

### 2.5. Foreign Applicants

Persons who hold a joint appointment at a South African (SA) institution and a foreign institution, and who are actively involved in research capacity building in SA, are eligible for the NRF funding instrument. The applicant must be employed by the SA institution in a full-time capacity for a period of at least six months per annum and spend at least six months per annum in South Africa.

### 3.1. Overarching Grant Criteria

The overarching eligibility criteria that apply to the majority of NRF research grants, are summarized below:

- All researchers who are a re-employed and remunerated on a full-time permanent or full-time contract basis at institutions as defined in Table 3.

- Persons from institutions not listed in Table 3, who conduct research and are formally affiliated to one of the institutions as defined for specific funding instruments in Table 4 (i.e. appointed as a visiting professor). In the case of grant funding, the funds will be paid to the affiliated institution.

- Retired academics/researchers who are:
  - o residing in South Africa;
  - o formally affiliated (e.g. appointed as an emeritus professor).

- Researchers/academics who are a Supernumerary/Contract employee, associate professor, emeritus professor, honorary research scientist, or person engaged in research capacity building for a South African Innovation Program (SAIP) which provides a combined funding instrument.

### 3.2. Research-intensive Instruments

**Table 2: Student Funding Criteria**

- **For a RISA research grant**:
  - All applicants must be permanent or supernumerary/contract employees, or members of the academic staff at the research institution as defined in Table 3.
  - The proposed work must be aligned with the strategy of the NRF and be at a stage of development where the awarded funds have the potential to be used to enhance new and unpredictable research.
  - **Eligibility**
    - The applicant must be an established researcher with a distinguished track record of high-quality research and whose application is formally supported by the research institution as defined in Table 3.
    - They must hold a PhD or equivalent degree and have an excellent and extended track record of at least six months per annum in South Africa.

**Table 3: Grant holder requirements**

The following is an overview of the criteria for research grants in the various funding instruments offered by the NRF (excluding Student Support). The proposed work must constitute research as defined by the NRF and be aligned with the strategy of the relevant funding instrument. Refer to the relevant framework and guidelines for each as a guide to the contents.

### 3.3. Blue Skies Research Programme

The Blue Skies Research Programme is a highly competitive funding instrument that aims to bring about new and unpredictable scientific/technological/scholarly discoveries. It provides the space for high-risk and high-reward fundamental research that can be described as multi-dimensional, self-initiated and curiosity-driven, associated high investment risk, addressing new phenomena, and pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge. Blue Skies research is associated with fundamental and basic research programmes and should be considered as a multi-dimensional concept that can be defined from various perspectives, namely that of the researcher, the funding agency, the object of the research, the research approach, and/or the contribution to the knowledge base.

**Table 4: Collaborative Postgraduate Training**

The objectives set out in the South African Human Resource Development Strategy (2012 – 2019) are to develop and increasing the number of skilled personnel in science, engineering, technology, and agriculture. It is not clear indication of the commitment the country has towards research development and innovation in science and technology.

The following table is a sample of the many collaboration opportunities which are available to postgraduate students. The objective is to provide a consolidated list of national and international opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaboration Opportunities</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universities and Research Institutions</td>
<td>University A, University B, University C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Organizations</td>
<td>International Science Organization, International Technology Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Partnerships</td>
<td>University A and Research Institution B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Postdoctoral Fellowships

Postdoctoral fellowships are awarded to applicants of any nationality, based on a pre-determined quote, and the awarded funds have to be used in South Africa. A Postdoctoral fellowship appointment may be at a university other than the university at which the candidate obtained their Doctorate. Exceptions can be considered based on a motivation submitted with the application for the Fellowship.
Infrastructure: appropriate infrastructure is working under the rubric of multi-University, University of Cape (ERP) for members must reflect the following minimum:

- 10 funding of the Department of Science and as well as one of effective training is that will be among a include encouraging researchers to at - rounded postgraduates to address national needs.

International partnerships: strategic Research in South that ( CPRR) is aimed at a unique opportunity to bring and in effect encourage and enhance the space for - responsiveness a education sector.

Community Engagement

The postgraduate training programmes should ideally be inter-university partnership and/or public/private partnership with government, industry universities; all working together a common objective to produce a stronger stream of well-rounded postgraduates to address national needs.

Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (CPRP)

The Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers is a discipline-based funding instrument that supports mainly basic research as the foundation of knowledge production in the humanities, Social and Natural Sciences.

As a competitive funding instrument, the main eligibility -

- the current NRF rating of the principal applicant; and
- the scientific merit of the research proposal.

Competitive Support for Unresearched (CSUR)

The aim of this funding instrument, is to provide research support to researchers, working in any research field, who do not, for a variety of reasons, hold a current NRF rating and who are not participating in any of the NRF capacity development funding instruments.

The strategic objectives of CSUR are to:

- strengthen the nation’s research base;
- increase the nation’s research output; and
- support the training of postgraduate students.

Education Research in South Africa

The call for funding for Education Research in South Africa (GCSSRP) that adheres to the following entry-level bids:

The research must address:

- the overarching theme of “Teaching and learning interactions that shape the qualitative outcomes of education” at all levels of the education and training system;
- national priorities in South Africa (a strong indication must be provided); and
- systemic implications (either through large-scale entrepreneurship or meta-analysis of post-existing small-scale research projects).

Both proposals submitted by consortia will be accepted. Consortia members must reflect the following minimum conditions:

- multi-institutional collaboration among at least three different institutions in South Africa, with at least one representing a rural-based institution and
- multi-disciplinary backgrounds.

Energy Research Programme (ERP)

The DST has developed and has started the roll-out of a collaborative model that recognises and supports the distribution of research capacity and expertise for a defined focus area, across more than one institution and/or division of an institution.

The various institutions are assigned areas of focus and responsibility within the broader defined focus area, preferably within their inter-area of co-existing competencies, capacities, expertise and specialisation. Optimisation of the use of this infrastructure (the Hluhluwe and the rest are the Spokes. A hub:-spokes cluster may have any number of spokes and these may be added as the need arises, for example if new sub-fields emerge. The hub and sub-spokes are mainly expected to focus on applied research with a goal of ensuring that South Africa stays abreast with regard to the latest technologies and research in a specific focus area. The hub and-spokes are also critical to realising the objectives of human capital development.

The first hub and-spokes cluster has been established to contribute to the low-strategic area of Energy Security and Technology Research at the University of Stellenbosch serving as the hub with three spokes focusing on wind, Solar thermal and Hydrogen. The main funding instrument allocated to these parable universities which includes Nelson Mandela Metropolis (MMTR) and the Centre for Renewable and Sustainable Energy Studies at the University of Stellenbosch serving as the hub with three spokes focusing on wind, Solar thermal and Hydrogen.

The NRF encourages the local design and development of the next generation of research equipment in South Africa. Therefore, institutions are encouraged to apply for support to access to global procurement, construction, testing and certification of novel research equipment.

The Innovation Plan

The NRF, through mobility grants, makes funds available for both national and international travel in order to support researchers who require access to equipment that is not available either regionally and/or nationally. The current NRF grant is divided into two types of opportunities, namely Equipment-related Travel Grants and Equipment-related Training Grants. The Equipment-related Travel Grant available to researchers based at institutions as defined in Table 3 in order to support:

- the larger research community to access state-of-the-art equipment that is not readily available regionally and/or nationally;
- researchers and postgraduate students in South Africa to access research equipment that is not available regionally and/or nationally such as synchrotron radiation facilities;
- research institutions hosting training workshops on the use of specialized equipment that is acquired through NRF equipment grants; and
- the larger research community to access training workshops on the use of specialized equipment that is acquired through NRF equipment grants.

The Innovation Plan

The Innovation Plan includes the following:

- the larger research community to access training workshops on the use of specialized equipment that is acquired through NRF equipment grants; and
- the larger research community to access training workshops on the use of specialized equipment that is acquired through NRF equipment grants.

The Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers (IFRR)

The Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers funding instrument was created with the aim of incentivising current NRF-funded researchers to maintain high-quality research, and to retain their current level of funding as long as they maintain their ratings.

The Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers (IFRR)

The Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers funding instrument includes encouraging researchers to:

- subject themselves for rating;
- maintain their ratings; and
- attain ever higher ratings until they reach the top rating (A2) (Refer to rating categories at https://www.nrf.ac.za/programmes/ifrr/).
Applicants must respond to one of the following funding instruments:

- IKS and Bi-eco-africa [Traditional Medicine, Food Security; or Cosmetics]
- IKS Epistemology (Libraries and/or Communication, Methodologies)
- IKS and Climate Change
- IKS and Energy
- IKS Practice of the Khoi,Nama, Griqua and San communities; and

- novel and creative thinking that will shift the boundaries of IKS knowledge production and

- Knowledge Interchange and Collaboration (KIC)

The Knowledge Interchange and Collaboration funding instrument offers researchers an opportunity to apply for funding for local or international travel; support grants to host an event such as a conference or workshop; and mobility grants to support local or international travel for research visits. The guidelines for filling out the application are available on the NRF website, usually published twice per annum.

- Nanotechnology Flagship Project (NFP) for Emerging Researchers

This funding instrument, which is in its third funding cycle, will be awarding development grants to early-career researchers in the field of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology for a period of five years.

- Professional Development Programme (PDP)

The Professional Development Programme is aimed at creating career development opportunities for researchers and science educators in training and in the core subject areas facing South Africa. The NFP portfolio opens the spectrum of the national research agenda and projects by focusing on the following key priority areas as identified in the National Nanotechnology Strategy (NNS): Energy Security; Improved Healthcare; Water Purification; Pollution Control; Minerals; and Advanced Materials and Manufacturing.

- Research Career Advancement Fellowships

The Research Career Advancement Fellowships are aimed at providing support for the training of individuals for research leadership in areas of Science, Engineering, Technology and Mathematical Sciences (STEM) at public universities. These Fellowships may be held in partnership with a public research institution such as a science council, a National Research Facility or an academic health complex. The Fellowships are not pre- allocated to institutions, and candidates must apply individually to the NRF. These applications must be submitted through the Office of the Deputy-Chancellor (DVC) for research, or equivalent. There is no restriction on the number of applications or on the number of researchers that can receive support for full-time research for a period of five years.

- Research Career Advancement Fellowships

The purpose of the Research Infrastructure Support Programme (RISP) is to support the acquisition, maintenance and development of state-of-the-art research equipment. Support through the National Equipment Programme (NEP) and the National Nanotechnology Equipment Programme (NNEP) is intended for researchers from South African higher education institutions, national research institutions such as museums, science council, National Research Facilities; and non-profit independent research and development bodies conducting research in South Africa. The main criteria for consideration for funding applications are as follows:

- Postgraduate research focusing on industry partnerships, including those that benefit the industry and contribute to the South African Research Chairs Initiative (DARTCHI).

- Research and Technology Fund (RTF)

The RTF is a fund provided by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), managed by the NRF, to fund research and related human capacity development in agricultural, forestry and fisheries science. There are two types of funding models, namely: (i) Co-Funding Model (CoFM) and (ii) Competitive Funding Model (ComFM). The primary difference between the 2 is that in the Co-Funding Model, an industry partner should be a co-funding partner and may define the research topic, whereas in the ComFM model, the project may be funded from the RTF alone, but the research topic and focus will be informed by the BTE RTF priorities. An RTF project:

- must be of a high quality agricultural and/or food science, engineering and/or related technology research/systems development, whose outputs should make a significant contribution towards improving the industrial competitiveness and sustainability of the agricultural/forestry sector's social wellbeing.

- must have clearly defined scientific, and/or technological, and/or appropriate systems outputs.

- must lead to development of a prototype (product, process, and/or technology) and/or partnership and/or industry partners/collaborated entities.

- must lead to the creation and transfer of new knowledge into a process or product (prototype), or the transition of existing...
knowledge into a new process or product to benefit the needs of small-holder farmers.

- Must provide support for professional development and small-holder technology needs.

Substantial Grants for Completion of Doctoral Degrees

This funding instrument is a special intervention aimed at addressing the decline in the number of full-time university academic staff with a Doctoral degree and the inadequate supervisory capacity that currently characterises the South African academic landscape. As a direct response, it seeks to accelerate the training of Doctoral candidates in order to improve the qualifications of employed academics and enhance their research and supervisory capacity. In recognition of the inhibiting role that limited funds play in the creation of a vibrant academic milieu, this intervention is aimed at addressing this problem for individuals in the final stages of their Doctoral studies.

In light of the above, the aims of the grant are to:

- Accelerate the Doctoral level training of full-time academic staff at public universities and research institutions;
- Improve the academic qualifications of employed academics in order to enhance research and supervisory capacity; and
- Effect a rapid transformation in the demographic composition of the emerging researcher community with regard to gender, race and persons with disabilities.

South African National Antarctic Programme (SANAP)

The South African National Antarctic Programme supports research in the Southern Ocean, including the Southern Ocean Islands (Mกรton Island, Prince Edward Island and Gough Island) and Antarctica. The funding instrument supports research in the fields of Earth Sciences, Engineering Sciences, Life Sciences, Oceanographic Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences, Law and Humanities.

South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARCHI)

The South African Research Chairs Initiative is a strategic intervention of the South African (SA) government designed to attract and retain excellence in research and innovation at SA universities. In particular, it is aimed at increasing scientific research capacity by developing human capital and stimulating the generation of new knowledge. It is also intended to support the realisation of SA’s transformation into a knowledge economy, in which the generation of knowledge translates into socio-economic benefits.

In order to apply for a Research Chair, an applicant must:

- be an established researcher;
- hold a PhD or an equivalent research qualification;
- have a research track record that is excellent and sustained, and clearly on an upward trajectory for more than four years;
- have a track record of supervising and mentoring postgraduate students;
- have a track record of being able to obtain external funding; and
- reside on a full-time basis in SA for the duration of the Research Chair award.

Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme (THRIP)

THRIP is a programme funded by the Department of Trade and Industry (the dti) and managed by the NRF. It is designed to enable South African industry to access (from research institutions) specific responses to technological needs and to produce a flow of highly skilled researchers and technology managers who understand research, technology development and the diffusion of technology from the viewpoints of both industry and academia. THRIP projects must satisfy the following:

- Be of high-quality science, engineering and/or technology research project.
- Must produce an innovative (able to be commercialised) product/process/prototype.
- Must indicate implementable outcomes that will benefit the industry partner.
- Must train South African or other African students at postgraduate level.
- Must involve technology transfer.
- Must have at least one industry partner, who is also co-funding the project.
- Must be based at a university or Science Engineering and Technology Institution.

Thuthuka Funding Instrument

The Thuthuka funding instrument is central to the NRF’s human capital development strategy, for advancing the equity and redress agenda within the research space. Operating within the ever-evolving higher education landscape, Thuthuka aims to develop human capital and to improve the research capacities of designated researchers (black African, Indian or Coloured, female or persons with disabilities) with the ultimate aim of reordering historical imbalances. This is done in partnership with publicly funded higher education institutions, science councils and other publicly funded research institutions.

Thuthuka is managed in three different funding tracks, targeting different research capacity development needs:

- PhD-Track for applicants who intend to obtain a PhD within the funding period;
- Post-PhD Track for applicants who intend to become established researchers by strengthening their research capabilities; and
- NRF Rating Track for applicants who would like to apply for NRF rating within the funding period.
## Institutions supported by the NRF’s funding and rating opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment area</th>
<th>Funding Instrument</th>
<th>Table 3: Institutions supported by the NRF’s funding and rating opportunities</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Bioinformatics &amp; Functional Genomics</td>
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<td>Education Research in South Africa</td>
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<td>Energy Research Programme</td>
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### ESTABLISHED RESEARCHERS

- **Professional Development Programme**
- **Subsistence Grants for Completion of Doctoral Degrees**
- **Student Support**
- **Thuthuka: Phd Track**
- **Competitive Support for Unrated Researchers**
- **Nanotechnology Flagships Project**
- **Thuthuka: Post-PhD Track**
- **African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme**
- **African Origins Platform**
- **Bioinformatics & Functional Genomics**
- **Blue Skies Research**
- **Collaborative Postgraduate Training Programme**
- **Community Engagement Programme**
- **Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers**
- **Education Research in South Africa**
- **Energy Research Programme**

### EVALUATION OF INDIVIDUALS

- **Professional Development Programme**
- **Subsistence Grants for Completion of Doctoral Degrees**
- **Student Support**
- **Thuthuka: PhD Track**
- **Competitive Support for Unrated Researchers**
- **Nanotechnology Flagships Project**

### NEXT GENERATION

- **Professional Development Programme**
- **Subsistence Grants for Completion of Doctoral Degrees**
- **Student Support**
- **Thuthuka: PhD Track**
- **Competitive Support for Unrated Researchers**
- **Nanotechnology Flagships Project**
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### Key to Table 3

- **Y** - Yes (supported)
- **N** - No (not supported)
- **L** - Linked (cannot apply directly but can benefit)

### South African HEIs (publicly funded)
- All South Africa's publicly funded institutions of higher learning

### South African science councils
- Statutory science councils (e.g. the CSIR, Mintek)

### Museums (publicly funded)
- Research-intensive museums in South Africa

### National Research Facilities
- (Thembisa LABS, HDZ, SADCE, SADEC, HEPHAS)

### Publicly funded research institutions
- NRF-approved research-intensive institutions (e.g. SANGA)

### Private HEIs operating in SA
- e.g. Monash University

### HIIs from other countries
- e.g. Oxford University, Harvard University

### NRF-approved NGOs
- Research-intensive NGOs registered in South Africa

### Private sector companies
- Local and foreign industry (non-profit organisations)

### Restrictions on Holding Multiple NRF Grants

The restrictions on holding multiple NRF awards are indicated in Table 4 (refer to Call documents for exceptions):

- A student may not receive more than one bursary or scholarship from the NRF concurrently.
- A student who is supported by an NRF bursary/scholarship/fellowship may not also apply for a research grant.
- A student may not receive an NRF bursary or scholarship if he/she is contracted to a company in any manner.
- A researcher may not receive more than one grant for an identical or closely related research proposal. The decision on whether two proposals are identical or sufficiently similar to constitute double-dipping will be based on peer review.
- An NRF research chair-holder will not be eligible for an additional NRF Discretionary Core Grant.
- A researcher may receive multiple awards from the NRF according to Table 4.
- An individual may not receive more than one Thuthuka grant.

Table 4 should be read by identifying the grant one holds (or hopes to hold) in column 1, and then moving horizontally across the table to check which grants can be held simultaneously in the funding instruments listed in the vertical headings.
Table 4: Restrictions on multiple funding combinations

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</table>

Key to Table 4:

- Y: This combination is allowed
- N: This combination is not allowed
- Y*: IF rated within the funding cycle

Duration of Awards

The duration of awards differs among funding instruments. In general, however, awards are made for periods/cycles of three years. In some cases, there may be a limit on the number of funding periods/cycles allowed, especially in the development funding instruments where the emphasis is on the development of research capacity. The duration of a Ph.D. grant is fixed in two cycles of three years each, giving a total support period of six years. Continued funding within the six-year period, however, is dependent on satisfactory progress, which is assessed annually. Details on the duration of awards are provided in Table 5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Investment Area</th>
<th>Funding Instrument</th>
<th>Award cycles/years</th>
<th>Maximum number of cycles</th>
<th>Total support period/years</th>
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**Grants Management**

Grants are managed by RISA’s Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate. Grants Directors are responsible for a number of funding instruments as described in this booklet. The management of grants is made up of two distinct activities, namely:

- **Pre-award activities or grant making:** All grants are awarded on a competitive basis through peer review of proposals submitted to the NRF; and
- **Post-award activities or grant paying:** The transfer of funds to the researcher’s institution and the monitoring of research progress and expenditure (grants are seldom, if ever, paid to individuals, whereas free-standing Scholarships and Fellowships are paid directly to the awardee).

**Note:** All applications for funding must be submitted during specific Call periods using the online submission system (https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za), unless otherwise indicated in the Call announcement.

The NRF manages and disburses funds received from various sources, including:

- the NRF Discretionary Core Grant;
- various Government departments, e.g.
  - Department of Science and Technology (DST);
  - Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET);
- o o o o Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF); and
- o o o o Department of Trade and Industry (the dti); and
- o o o o Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT).

The funds are disbursed according to strict criteria set by the sponsor, and are transferred to the NRF as either Ring-fenced or Contract grants.

The Grant Management Cycle is described in Figure 1. The typical period of a Grant Management Cycle is one calendar year.
It is important to note that the grant management cycle is slightly different for International Research Grants. The cycle for International Research Grants makes provision for joint committees with international partners for funding decision-making purposes. Please see the figure below:
The NRF pays grants to the grant-holder’s institution of employment. Batch payments are made twice a month during the first and third week of the month. Each payment is accompanied by a description of the grant for which the payment is earmarked. Institutional finance officials process the expenditure online at http://nrfonline.ac.za. Updated statements are generated after payments have been made.

Grant statements can also be accessed online on a continuous basis by the grant-holder and the institution’s research office at http://nrfonline.ac.za through the Grant-holder Tools facility or Institutional Facilities.

Awards

Releases

Expense reporting

Payments

Award letter is an NRF commitment to pay the grant subject to a number of conditions

The grant is released (or made available for payment) on receipt of acceptance of the Conditions of Grant and any other programme-specific requirements

The grant holder’s institutional finance department reports on expenditure

Payments are made against the reported expenditure
Evaluation and Rating of Individuals

The evaluation and rating of individuals is based primarily on the quality of research outputs in the recent past (over the last eight years) and is undertaken by national and international peer reviewers, who are requested to critically evaluate the quality of the research outputs and the applicant's research standing in their field. Currently there are five rating categories (A, B, C, F, and Fd).

There are two main reasons why researchers should seek to be rated:

- Rated researchers are eligible to receive incentive funding. Moreover, they can apply for a grant at any time during their six-year rating cycle, and their rating is often taken into account in the review process.
- Ratings can be used as a tool for benchmarking purposes (i.e. researchers can compare their standing in the research community against that of their peers nationally and internationally).

Eligibility for Rating

The following persons are eligible to apply for evaluation and rating:

1. Researchers who are employed and remunerated on a full-time, part-time or contract basis at South African (SA) higher education institutions (HEIs), museums or NRF-recognised research institutions. (For review purposes academics/researchers, build 6 applies.)

2. Full-time temporary staff members at SA HEIs and SA museums who enjoy the conditions of service that normally also apply to their permanent full-time colleagues.

3. Persons who are in the process of being appointed in full-time posts at SA HEIs and SA museums (i.e. applications from such persons can be submitted by the HEI). However, a motivation confirming the researcher's employment and proposed starting date should be provided before the rating will become valid.

4. Persons holding joint appointments between a SA institution and a foreign institution who are actively involved in research capacity building locally and who are actively monitoring/training postgraduate students/youth research staff. Such persons should be appointed by the SA institution in a full-time capacity for a period of at least six months per annum and should spend at least six months per annum in SA. A motivation should be submitted by the applicant's institution confirming that these conditions have been met.

5. Persons holding joint appointments between two institutions within SA (of which at least one appointment should be a formal association with an NRF-recognised research institution), who are actively involved in research capacity building locally and monitoring/training postgraduate students/youth research staff. Such persons must indicate which institution is their primary institution (i.e. the institution to which the rating must be linked). A motivation from the institution submitting the application must be submitted confirming that these conditions have been met.

6. Retired academics/researchers must meet all the following criteria:
   - o resident in SA; and
   - o formally affiliated to an SA HEI (e.g. appointed as an emeritus professor; honorary research associate/professor or supernumerary/contract employee); the candidate's application for rating must be formally supported and endorsed by the SA HEI to which he/she is affiliated, or anticipate to be affiliated; and
   - o active researchers with a distinguished track record of research and postgraduate student supervision; and
   - o actively monitoring/training postgraduate students/youth research staff.

Rating Procedure

The rating procedure is described on the NRF website (http://www.nrf.ac.za/projects/jdr-120) and briefly illustrated in Figure 4.
Conclusion

The business of the NRF may appear to be complex. It is hoped that this overview has helped to provide some clarity. More detailed information on award opportunities is available on the NRF website (www.nrf.ac.za). General enquiries may be directed by e-mail to info@nrf.ac.za, and grant-related enquiries to supportdesk@nrf.ac.za.

Contact details: GMSA and Reviews & Evaluation Staff

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